


Effective Classroom Practice: Academic Success and Task Difficulty


Session 4: Classroom MBI
Team Training
Presented by the MBI Consultants



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Effective Classroom Practices: The "Great Eight"


- ▶ Expectations and rules
- ▶ Procedures and routines
- ▶ Continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behaviors
- ▶ Continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior
- ▶ Active supervision
- ▶ Multiple opportunities to respond
- ▶ Activity sequence and offering choice
- ▶ Academic success and task difficulty



What is Modifying Task Difficulty?

- Modifying instruction or providing accommodations to ensure the student experiences higher levels of academic success.





Why Consider Task Difficulty?

- ▶ Task difficulty is one of the **primary curricular variables** that can set the occasion for problem behaviors in the classroom.
- ▶ Any **mismatch** between student ability and task difficulty is **potentially problematic**.

(Gunter, Denny, Jack, Shores, & Nelson, 1993)



Why Consider Task Difficulty?

- ▶ Exposure to **tasks that are too difficult** result in lower rates of on-task behavior and increased rates of disruptive and other problem behaviors.

(Gickling & Armstrong, 1978; Umbreit, Lane, & Dejud, 2004)



Proper Instructional Level



- ▶ Seatwork assignments that contain **70% - 85% known** elements
- ▶ Reading assignments **93% - 97% known** elements

(Gickling & Armstrong, 1978; Umbreit, Lane, & Dejud, 2004)



Why Consider Modifying Task Difficulty?

Increases and promotes...

- ▶ on-task behavior
- ▶ task completion
- ▶ task comprehension
- ▶ appropriate class-wide behavior



(Gickling & Armstrong, 1978; Kern & Clemens, 2007)



Strategies for Modifying Task Difficulty

- } Change Amount of Work
- } Change Amount of Time
- } Change Student Output
- } Reduce Reading/Writing Demand
- } Peer Support
- } Scaffolding

(Simmons & Kameenui, 1996; Vaughn, Duchnowski, Sheffield, & Kutash, 2005)



1. Change Amount of Work

- ▶ Put fewer problems on a worksheet
- ▶ Highlight, in a color, the problems for the student to complete
- ▶ Have the student cover all tasks except the one she is working on at the time
- ▶ Break up assignment into smaller parts



2. Change Amount of Time



- ▶ Have shorter work periods with other assignments in between
- ▶ Provide physical breaks between difficult tasks
- ▶ Provide alternative times for students to complete their work

3. Change Student Output

- ▶ Provide students with a choice between oral or written answers
- ▶ Allow students to dictate answers to a peer, teacher, or paraprofessional or tape record answers to tests or assignments
- ▶ Allow students to video or take pictures to produce journals or compose essays

4. Reduce Reading/Writing Demand

- ▶ Include illustrations on worksheets describing how to complete tasks
- ▶ Highlight and underline important words in instructions and texts
- ▶ Create guided notes that highlight key points
- ▶ Permit students to use outlining software to facilitate planning

5. Peer Support

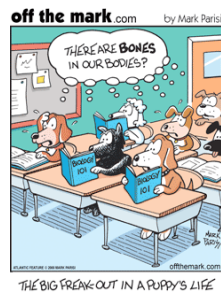
- ▶ The academic tasks involved should be well-structured and the responses required should be simple rather than complex
- ▶ Different students should be involved in the tutoring so that the student with problems is not always the one being tutored
- ▶ Establish and teach the procedures for peer tutoring sessions

(Miller, 2005)



5. Peer Support

- ▶ Class-wide Peer Tutoring
 - <http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu>
- ▶ Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)
 - <http://www.cec.sped.org>



6. Scaffolding

- What is scaffolding?
 - Personal guidance, assistance, and support that a teacher, peer, materials, or task provides a learner until he or she can apply new skills and strategies independently

(Simmons & Kameenui, 1996)



How Do We Scaffold Instruction?

- ▶ First, the teacher models how to perform a new or difficult task
- ▶ Second, the teacher and students work together to perform the task
- ▶ Third, students work with a partner or a small cooperative group to complete the task
- ▶ Fourth, the student independently completes the task

(Ellis & Larkin, 1998)

Practice Addressing Task Difficulty

1. Read the classroom vignettes.
2. Determine which strategy would be most effective and efficient for each vignette.
(Use *Addressing Task Difficulty Strategies*)
3. Share your responses with a shoulder partner.

1. Fact Sheet
2. Examples



Addressing Task Difficulty in Your Classroom

List several of the activities students complete in your classroom...

Identify ways you could address task difficulty in your classroom:

Change Amount of Work; Change Amount of Time
Change Student Output; Reduce Reading/Writing Demand
Peer Support; Scaffolding

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	



3. Addressing Task Difficulty